

A VISIT TO THE HARVEST FIELD

NO. 1025

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waited for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be you also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.”
James 5:7-8.*

THE earth that yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater has received its constitution from God, and it is governed through His wise providence by fixed laws that are infinitely reliable. And yet, at the same time, with such diversified conditions and minute peculiarities as may well convince us that the Almighty intended the operations of nature to supply us with spiritual instruction as well as with material good, He who ordained the seed time and the harvest meant to teach us by them.

Nor has He left us in vague uncertainty as to the lessons we should learn! In metaphor and parable He has interpreted them to us. The author of the Bible is also the architect of the universe. The book that is writ and the things that are made alike bear witness to His eternal power and Godhead. He who shall study them both will see clearly the idioms of one author. In the two masterpieces the hand of the same great artist may be discerned.

We are all so dependent upon the labors of the field that we ought at the season of harvest to remember how much we owe to the God of the harvest. It is but common gratitude that we should go to the field awhile, and there hear what God the Lord may have to say to us among the waving sheaves. No matter what our business may be, the wealth of the country must to a large extent depend upon the crops that are produced, and the well-being of the whole state has a greater dependence upon the harvest than many of you could probably imagine.

We will not forget the bounties of God. We will not fail at least to endeavor to learn the lesson which this bountiful season is intended to teach us. Our Lord Jesus often preached of the sowing and of the reaping. His were the best of sermons and His the choicest of illustrations. Therefore, we shall do well if we all repair to the field, mark the scattering of the corn, and the ingathering of it, to enforce the exhortation of the text.

Our subject, tonight, will involve three or four questions—*How does the husbandman wait? What does he wait for? What is his encouragement? What are the benefits of his patient waiting?* Our experience is similar to his. We are husbandmen, so we have to toil hard, and we have to wait long. Then the hope that cheers, the fruit that buds and blossoms, and verily, too, the profit of that struggle of faith and fear incident to waiting will all crop up as we proceed.

I. First, then, HOW DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT?

He waits *with a reasonable hope* for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. He expects the harvest because he has plowed the fields and sown the grain. If he had not, he would not be an example for our imitation. Had he left his fields fallow, never stirred the clods, and never cast in among them the golden seed, he would be an idiot he expecting the soil to produce a harvest by itself. Thorns and thistles would it bring forth to him—nothing more.

Out on the folly of those who flatter their souls with a prospect of good things in times to come while they neglect the opportunity of sowing good things in the time present. They say they hope it will be well with them at the end. But since it is not well with them now, why should they expect any change—much less a change contrary to the entire order of providence? Is it not written, “He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption”? Do you expect to sow to the flesh and reap salvation?

That is a blessing reserved for him who sows to the Spirit, for he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

As for the man who scatters nothing but the wild oats of sin, who simply lives to indulge his own passions, and determinately resolves to neglect the things that make for his peace—he can but upbraid himself if he expect to reap anything good of the Lord. They that sow to the wind shall reap the whirlwind, they that sow nothing shall reap nothing, they that sow sparingly shall reap sparingly. It is only those who by God's grace have been enabled to sow abundantly, though they have gone forth weeping, who shall afterwards come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

Patience by all means, but not that foolish patience which expects something good to turn up in spiritual things, as some fools do in business when they turn aside from legitimate trade to foster bubble schemes. You shall have, my brother, after all according to what you are, and to what you are fairly going for. If you are a believer, to you shall be the promise—you shall share the victories and spoils of your Lord. If you are a careless, godless worldling, to you shall be the fruit of your deeds, and sad and bitter shall be those grapes of Gomorrah that you shall have to eat.

The husbandman waits with a reasonable hope. He does not look for grain where he has cast in garlic. Save then that you are a fool, you will like him count only on the fruit of your own sowing. While he waits with a patient hope, he is, no doubt, all the more patient of the issue, because his hope is so reasonable. And not only does he wait with patience, but some stress is put upon the length of it, "And has long patience for the precious fruit of the earth."

Now, brethren in Christ, our waiting, if it be the work of the Holy Spirit, must have this long patience in it. Are you a sufferer? There are sweet fruits to come from suffering! "Not for the present seems it to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, *afterward* it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby." Have long patience for those peaceable fruits. You shall be brought out of your trouble, deliverance will be found for you out of your affliction when the discipline for which you were brought into it has been fulfilled.

Have *long* patience, however, for not the first month does the husbandman find a harvest. If he has sown in the winter, he does not expect he will reap in the early spring. He does not go forth with his sickle in the month of May and expect to find golden sheaves. He waits. The moons wax and wane. Suns rise and set. But the husbandman waits till the appointed time is come. Wait you, O sufferer, till the night be over. Watch after watch you have already passed through. The morning breaks. Tarry you a little longer, for if the vision tarries it shall come. "You shall stand in your lot in the end of the days." Ere long you shall have a happy exit out of your present trials.

Are you a worker? Then you need as much patience in working as you do in suffering. We must not expect to see immediate results in all cases from the preaching of the Gospel, from the teaching of Scripture in our classes, from distributing religious literature, or from any other kind of effort. Immediate results may come. Sometimes they do, and they greatly cheer the worker, but it is given to some to wait long, like the husbandman, ere the fruit reaches maturity.

Truth, like the grain of mustard seed, does not wax into a tree tomorrow, being sown today. It takes its leisure. Or like the leaven in the measure, it does not work in the next moment. It must have its time. If you have some principle to teach that is now obnoxious, go on with it. Perhaps you may never see it popular in your day. Do not mind the fickle winds or fret yourself because of the nipping frosts. Truth is mighty and it will prevail, though it may have a hard fight before it wins the victory.

Souls may not be won to God the first time you pray for them, nor the first time you exhort them, nay, nor the twentieth time. If you have gone to a sinner once on Christ's errand, and he has rejected you, go again seven times. Nay, go again seventy times seven. For if you should at last succeed by your Master's gracious help, it will well repay you. The long, tedious winter of your waiting will appear as a short span to look back upon when you have reaped the field of your labor. The little patience that you had to exert for a while will seem as nothing, like the travail of the mother when the man-child is born into the world. Hush, then, your sad complaints, and still your petulant wailings.

*“O dreary life! we cry, O dreary life!
And still the generations of the birds
Sing thro’ our sighing; and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife.”*

Be patient, O worker, for impatience sours the temper, chills the blood, sickens the heart, prostrates the vigor of one’s spirit, and spoils the enterprise of life before it is ripe for history. Wait you, clothed with patience, like a champion clad in steel. Wait with a sweet grace, as one who guards the faith and sets an example of humility. Wait in a right spirit, anxious, prayerful, earnest, submissive to the ways of God, not doubtful of His will. Disciple of Jesus, “Learn to labor and to wait.”

With regard to the result of Christian obedience, the lesson is no less striking. The first thing that a farmer does by way of seeking gain on his farm is to make a sacrifice which could seem immediately to entail on him a loss. He has some good wheat in the granary, and he takes out sacks full of it and buries it. He is so much the poorer, is he not? At any rate, there is so much the less to make bread for his household. He cannot get it again. It is under the clods, and there it must die, for except it die, it brings not forth fruit.

You must not expect, as soon as you become a Christian, that you shall obtain all the gains of your religion, perhaps you may lose all that you have for Christ’s sake. Some have lost their lives. They have sown their house and land, relatives, comfort, ease, and at last they have sown life itself in Christ’s field, and they seemed for the time to be losers. But verily I say unto you, this day, if you could see them in their white robes before the throne of God, rejoicing, you would see how rich a harvest they have reaped, and how the sowing which seemed a loss at first has ended, through God’s abundant grace, in the greatest eternal gain.

Have patience, brother, have patience. That is a false religion that aims at present worldly advantage. He who becomes religious for the loaves and fishes, when he has eaten his loaves and fishes, has devoured his religion. There is nothing in such piety but pretension. If you can be bought, you can be sold. If you have taken it up for gain, you will lay it down for what promises you a better bargain. Be willing to be a loser for Christ, and so prove you are His genuine follower.

The husbandman, I say, does not expect immediate reward, but reckons upon being a loser for a while. He waits, waits with long patience, for the precious fruit of the earth. It is a reasonable waiting on the outset, and not regretful when wearied and worried with delay.

And while the husbandman waits, you observe in the text he waits with his eye upward, he waits until God shall send him the early and the latter rain. He has wit enough for this. Even if he be a worldly man, he knows that the harvest depends not only on the seed he sows and on the soil he cultivates, but upon the rain which he cannot control. The rain that comes at the bidding of the Almighty. If the skies be brass, the clods will be iron. Unless God shall speak to the clouds, and the clouds shall speak to the earth, the earth will not speak to the corn, and the corn will not make us speak the words of rejoicing.

Every husbandman is aware of this, and every Christian must remember it. “I am to wait,” says a sufferer, “for God’s help and for the graces that come by affliction, but I must wait with my eye upward, for all the plowing of affliction will not profit me, and all the sowing of meditation will not speed me, unless God sends His gracious Spirit like showers of heavenly rain. If I am a worker, I must work. When I wait, I must wait always looking upward.”

The keys of the rain clouds which water the earth hang at the girdle of JEHOVAH. None but the eternal Father can send the Holy Spirit like showers on the church. Only He can send the Comforter, and my labor will prosper. It will not be in vain in the Lord. But if He deny, if He withhold this covenant blessing, ah me! work is useless, patience is worthless, and all the cost is bootless—it is in vain. In spiritual, as in temporal things, “It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness.” “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” We must have the

dew, O God, or else our seed shall rot under the clods. We must wait, and wait with our eye upwards, or else our expectation will perish as a still-born child.

So with regard to the comfort, and joy, and ultimate fruit of our faith, we must have our eye upward looking for the coming of the Lord from heaven, for the day of His appearing will be the day of our manifestation. Our life is hid with Christ now. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him. When He shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of the assembled multitude, we shall be conspicuous in glory too. Not till then shall the fullness of the reward be bestowed, but the risen saints shall be glorified in the glorification of their coming Lord. Oh, for more of this living with the eyes upward, less minding of earthly things, and more looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God!

Note, however, that while the husbandman waits with his eye upward, he waits with his hands at work, engaged in restless toil. He sows, and it is a busy time. When he sees the green blade, what then? He has to work. Those weeds must not be suffered to outgrow the wheat and choke it. Up and down the field the laborer must go, and the husbandman must be at the expense of this, and all along until the wheat is ripened there is sure to be something to do in this field, so his eyes must be keen, his skill must be taxed, and no drudgery must be disdained. In all labor there is profit, but nothing is gained without pains.

We look up to God. He will not accept the look of a sluggard. The eye that look up to God must be attended with the hands that is ready for work. So if I suffer, and expect the blessing for the suffering, I must spend solitary hours in my chamber seeking and searching. To wit, seeking in prayer, and searching God's Word for the blessing. If I am a worker, I must look to God for the result, but then I must also use all the means. In fact, the Christian should work as if all depended upon him and pray as if it all depended upon God.

He should be always nothing in his own estimation. Yet he should be one of those gloriously active nothings of which God makes great use, for He treats the things that are not as though they were and gets glory out of them. Yes, the husbandman waits. He cannot push on the months. He cannot hasten the time of the harvest home, but he does not wait in silence, in sluggishness and negligence. He keeps to his work and waits.

So do you, O Christian men! Wait for the coming of your Lord, but let it be with your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning, as good servants attending to the duties of the house, until the master of the house returns to give you the reward.

The husbandman waits under changeable circumstances, and various contingences. At one time he sees the fair prospect of a good crop. The wheat has come up well. He has never seen more green springing from the ground. But peradventure, it may be too strong and may need even to be put back. By-and-by, after long showers and cold nights, the wheat looks yellow, and he is half afraid about it. In a while there comes, or he fancies there is blight, or a black smut. Nobody knows what may happen. Only a farmer knows how his hopes and fears alternate and fluctuate from time to time. It is too hot, too cold. It is too dry. It is too wet. It is hardly ever quite right, according to his judgment, or rather according to his unbelief. He is full of changes in his mind because the season is full of changes. Yet he waits, and he waits with patience.

Ah dear friends, when we work for God, how often will this happen! I speak from no inconsiderable experience. There are always changes in the field of Christian labor. At one time we see many conversions, and we bless God that there are so many seals to our testimony. But some of the converts after a while disappoint us. There was the blossom, but it produced no fruit. Then there will come a season when many appear to backslide. The love of many waxes cold. Perhaps we have found in the church the black smut of heresy. Some deadly heresy creeps in, and the anxious husbandman fears there will be no harvest after all. Oh, patience, sir, patience. Ten thousand husbandmans' fears have been disappointed this year. Many a fretful expression and murmuring word need to be repented of, as the farmer has looked at last upon the well-filled ear, and the heavy wheat sheaf.

So, too, mayhap, O evangelical worker, it will be with you. When God shall give you a rich return for all you have done for Him, you will blush to think you ever doubted. You will be ashamed to think you ever grew weary in His service. You shall have your reward. Not tomorrow, so wait. Not the next day perhaps, so be patient. You may be full of doubts one day, your joys sink low. It may be rough windy weather with you in your spirit. You may even doubt whether you are the Lord's, but if you have rested in the name of Jesus, if by the grace of God you are what you are, if He is all your salvation, and all your desire—have patience, have patience, for the reward will surely come in God's good time. Now this is how the husbandman waits and becomes to us the model of patience.

II. Very briefly, in the second place, we have to ask, WHAT DOES THE HUSBANDMAN WAIT FOR? for we are in this respect like him.

He waited for results, for real results, right results. He hopes also rich results. And this is just what we are waiting for—waiting as sufferers for the results of sanctified affliction. May those results be real, may they be right, may they be rich. Oh that we might have every virtue strengthened, every grace refined, by passing through the furnace.

There are great blessings connected with patient endurance as in Job's case. He had a plenteous harvest, may we have the same. And you workers, you must work for results, for, though conversion is the work of God, it is in many cases as clearly a product of the holy living, the devout teaching, and the fervent praying of His servants, as any effect can be the result from a cause. Go on, go on, and may you have real conversions—not pretended conversions—not such as are sometimes chronicled in newspapers—"Fifty-one conversions of an evening"—as if anybody knew! May there be real conversions, and ripe fruits for Jesus in the growth and advance of those who are converted and may many of them turn out to be such fruit-bearing Christians when they are matured in grace, that the richest result in the prosperity of the church may come to you from all your work.

You are waiting for results. And you are, also, dear brethren, like the husbandman, waiting for a reward. All the while till the harvest comes, he has nothing but outlay. From the moment he sows, it is all outgoing until he sells his crops, and then, recovering at once the principal and the interest, he gets his reward.

In this world, look not for a reward. You may have a grateful acknowledgment in the peace, and quiet, and contentment of your own spirit, but do not expect even that from your fellow men. The pure motive of any man who serves his generation well is generally misrepresented. As a rule the loungee looks on at the laborer not to praise, but to blame him, not to cheer him, but to chide him. The less he does, the less he will be open to rebuke, and the more he does oftentimes, and the more vigorously, the more he shall be upbraided.

Look not for your reward here. Suppose men praise you, what is their praise worth? It would not fill your nostrils if you were about to die. The approbation of those who have neither skill nor taste—what pleasure can it afford the artist? Should one stoop for it, or having it, lift his head the higher? Our reward is the approbation of God, which He will give of His abundant grace. He first gives us good works, as one observes, and then rewards us for those good works, as if they were altogether our own. He gives rewards though they are not a debt, but altogether of grace.

Look for the reward hereafter. Wait a bit, man, wait a bit. Your reward is not yet. Wait till the week is over, and then shall come the wages. Wait until the sun is gone down, and then there will be the penny for every laborer in the vineyard. Not yet, not yet, not yet. The husbandman waited for the precious fruit of the earth. This is what we wait for.

III. Thirdly, WHAT IS THE HUSBANDMAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN WAITING? Well, he has many.

The first is that the fruit he waits for is precious. He waits for the precious fruit of the earth. It is worth waiting for. Who that walks through a corn field, such corn fields as we have seen this year, where the crops are plentiful, but will say, "Well, this was, after all, worth all the trouble and all the expense, and all the long patience of that winter which is over and gone." If the Lord should draw you

near unto Himself by your affliction, if He should make His image in you more clear, it will be worth waiting for. And if, after your labors He should give you some soul for your reward, oh, will it not repay you? Mother, if your dear child should after all be brought back from his sinful ways to love his Savior! Sunday school teacher, if some of those little girls should love the name of Jesus, and you should live to see them honored members of the church of God, will it not be worth waiting for?

It were worthwhile to preach every Sabbath for a million years, if but one soul was brought in at last. I remember Mr. Richard Knill saying if there was one unconverted person, and he were in Siberia, and God had ordained that he should only be saved by all the Christians in all the world (and that would be a vast number), all of them making a journey to Siberia to talk with him, it would be worth all the trouble if the soul were at length brought in. And so it would. We may wait, therefore, with patience, because the reward of our labor will be precious.

Above all, the reward of hearing the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," is worth waiting for! Even now to get a word from Him is quite enough to cheer us on, though it be a soft, still voice that speaks it, but oh, the joy of that loud voice, "Well done."

It were worth going through a thousand perils by land and by sea to come out and win that, "Well done." We might count it worthwhile to face the lions of hell and do battle with Apollyon himself, to snatch but one poor lamb from between their jaws. It were worthwhile to do all that, I say, if we might hear the Master say to us, "Well done," at the last. This then encourages us, as well as the husbandman—the preciousness of the fruit.

A godly husbandman waits with patience, again, because he knows God's covenant. God has said, "Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease," and the Christian farmer knowing this is confident. But oh, what strong confidences have we who have looked to Christ, and who are resting on the faithful word of a covenant God. He cannot fail us. It is not possible that He should allow our faith to be confounded. "Heaven and earth may pass away," and they *shall*, but His Word shall not fail.

They that sow in faith shall reap abundantly. The glory shall be theirs. And brother workers, if we do not for a time see all the results we expect, yet the Lord has said, "Surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God." The day must come when the dwellers in the wilderness shall bow before Him and lick the dust. "He has set his king upon His Holy hill of Zion," and they that said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us," will have to submit themselves, and lick the dust at His feet. Have courage, therefore. The covenant stands good, the harvest must come as surely as the seed time has come.

Moreover, every husbandman is encouraged by the fact that he has seen other harvests. I suppose if the farmer had never heard of a harvest, and had never seen one, it would take some considerable persuasion to get him to sow his seed. But then he knows his father sowed seed, and his grandsire, and that the race of men in all generations have put their seed under the clods as an act of faith, and God has accepted their faith, and sent them a return.

And O brethren, have not we multitudes of instances to confirm our confidence? Let us cheerfully resign ourselves to the Lord's will in suffering, for as others of His saints who went before us have reaped the blessing, so shall we. Let us work on for our Lord and Master, knowing that apostles and confessors, and a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before have seen great results, and so shall we. Let us patiently tarry till the Lord come, for as in the first coming those that waited for Him rejoiced, so shall those who are found watching and waiting at His second advent. We have not only the promise of God, but that promise fulfilled to tens of thousands who have preceded us, therefore, we should be ashamed to be impatient, rather let us patiently wait and work on, till the day breaks and the harvest comes.

IV. And now, brethren, do you ask, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE?

To patiently wait God's appointed time is our business. I have shown you how we are to wait, but note this. Whatever benefit there may be in patience, it is very clear there is none in impatience. Suppose a man should be impatient under suffering. Will it diminish his suffering? Will it increase the

probabilities of his restoration? We all know that the irritability of temper which is caused by impatience is one of the difficulties which the physician has to battle with. When the patient is calm, there is a better chance of his recovery. If we were never impatient till there was any good to be derived from our fretfulness, we would not be impatient just yet.

There is a story told of Mr. Hill being on board a vessel once. It is said he heard the mate swear, and afterwards he heard the captain use a profane oath. I think Mr. Hill interposed as the captain was about to swear again, and said, "No, no, let us be fair, let us have everything turn and turn about. Your mate has sworn, and you have had an oath. Now it is my turn—my turn to swear." The captain looked at him somewhat astonished and had to admit that there was a degree of rightness and propriety in every man having his turn. However, Mr. Hill did not swear, and the captain said, "I suppose, sir, you don't mean to take your turn, you really don't mean to swear." "Oh, yes," said the good old man, "I mean to swear as soon as ever I can see the good of it."

We might do the same by our impatience, brethren. Let us be impatient as soon as ever we can see the use it will serve. If the farmer should want rain just now, his impatience would not influence the clouds and make them pour out their torrents. If your child happened to be very petulant, and have a very noisy tongue, and a mischievous disposition, the mother's impatience would not calm the child, control its temper, still its fitful passion, or subdue its stubborn humor. Whatever happens to you, there is nothing can happen to you worse than your being impatient, for of all troubles in the world that one can be troubled with, an impatient spirit is about the worst.

O that you would endeavor to conquer impatience. It cast Satan out of heaven, when he was impatient at the honor and dignity of the Son of God. He was impatient at being a servant to his Maker and was driven from his high estate. Let us be rid of impatience which made Cain kill his brother, and which has done a thousand mischievous things since. May God grant us like the husbandman patiently to watch and wait.

But the benefits of patience are too many for me to hope to enumerate them. Suffice it to say, patience saves a man from great discouragement. If I expect that God will bless my labors to a large extent the first month, and so strain every nerve and toil with every sinew till my strength is ready to yield, and my spirit begins to flag, and the blessing does not come at the time I looked for, I shall be disheartened. But if I expect some result, a great result in God's appointed week of harvest, even though I may not count on seeing it myself at once, I shall keep on renewing my labors, reviving my hopes, and encouraging myself in the Lord my God.

Surely a husbandman would give up his farm in sheer despair if he expected a harvest in a month's time after sowing. He would be month after month in a very sad way, if waiting to see it were not a condition for which he was thoroughly prepared. If you expect an interval during which your patience will be tried, you will not grow discouraged, because it is absolutely requisite that you should wait. Expect to wait for glory, expect to wait for the reward which God has promised. And while you are waiting on the Lord, your bread shall be certain, and your water shall be sure. You shall often eat meat, thank God, and take courage. The short days and long nights shall not be all charged with gloom, but full often they shall be tempered with good cheer.

When we have patience, it keeps us in good heart for service. A man to whom it is given to wait for a reward, keeps up his courage, and when he has to wait, he says, "It is no more than I expected. I never reckoned that I was to slay my enemy at the first blow. I never imagined that I was to capture the city as soon as ever I had dug the first trench. I reckoned upon waiting, and now that is come, I find that God gives me the grace to fight on and wrestle on, till the victory shall come."

And patience saves a man from a great deal of haste and folly. A hasty man never is a wise man. He is wise that halts a little, and ponders his ways, especially when adversity crosses his path. I have known brothers in the ministry get discouraged, and leave their pulpits, and repent as long as ever they lived that they left a sphere of labor, where they ought to have toiled on. I have known Christians get discouraged, and touchy, and angry, fall out with the church of which they were members, go out in the

wilderness, and leave the fat pastures behind them. They have only had to regret all their lives that they had not a little more patience with their brethren, and with the circumstances which surrounded them.

Whenever you are about to do anything in a great hurry, pause and pray. The hot fever in your own system ill fits you to act discreetly. While you tarry for a more healthy temperature of your own feelings, there may be a great change in the thermometer outside as to the circumstances that influence you. Great haste makes little speed. He who believes shall not make haste. And as the promise runs, he shall never be confounded.

Above all, patience is to be commended to you because it glorifies God. The man who can wait, and wait calmly, astonishes the worldling, for the worldling wants it now. You remember John Bunyan's pretty parable (as you all know it, I will only give the outline)—of Passion and Patience? Passion would have all his best things first, and one came in, and lavished before him out of a bag all that the child could desire. Patience would have his best things last, and Patience sat and waited, so when Passion had used up all his joy, and all he sought for, Patience came in for his portion, and as John Bunyan very well remarked, there is nothing to come after the last, and so the portion of Patience lasted forever.

Let me have my best things last, my Lord, and my worst things first. Be they what they may, they shall be over, and then my best things shall last forever and forever. He that can wait has faith, and it is faith that marks the true Christian. He that can wait has grace, and it is grace that marks the child of God. O that the Lord would grant to every one of you more and more of this excellent grace of patience, to the praise and glory of His name.

I have well nigh done. Yet there is one other respect in which our case is like that of the husbandman. As the season advances, his anxieties are prone to increase rather than to abate. If he has had long need of patience while the seasons have succeeded each other, and while organic changes have been in course of development, surely there is a stronger demand on his patience as the crisis approaches when he shall reap the produce. How anxiously at this season will he observe the skies, watch the clouds, and wait the opportune time to get in his crops and garner them in good condition! Is there no peril that haunts him lest, after all, the blast or the mildew should cheat his hopes? Lest fierce winds should lay the full-grown stems prostrate on the ground? Lest then the pelting showers of rain should drench the well-filled ears of corn? I might almost call this the husbandman's last fear, and yet the most nervous fear that agitates his mind.

In like manner, beloved, we have a closing scene in prospect which may, and will in all probability, involve a greater trial of faith, and a sterner call for patience than any or all of the struggles through which we have already passed. Perhaps I can best describe it to you by quoting two passages of Scripture, one especially addressed to workers, the other more particularly to sufferers.

For the first of these texts, you will find it in Hebrews 10:35-36, *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise."* This is sweet counsel for you, O pilgrim, to Zion's city bound. When you were young and strong, you did walk many a weary mile with that staff of promise. It helped you over the ground. Don't throw it aside as useless, now that you are old and infirm. Lean upon it. Rest upon that promise, in your present weakness, which lightened your labor in the days of your vigor.

"Cast not away your confidence." But, brethren, there is something more. The apostle says, "You have need of patience, after you have done the will of God." But why, you will say, is patience so indispensable at this juncture of experience? Doubtless you all know that we are never so subject to impatience as when there is nothing we can do. All the while the farmer is occupied with plowing, harrowing, tilling, drilling, hoeing, and the like, he is too busy to be fretful. It is when the work is done, and there is nothing more to occupy his hands that the very leisure he has to endure gives occasion to secret qualms and lurking cares.

So it ever is with us. While "we are laborers together with God," our occupation is so pleasant that we little heed the toil and moil of hard service. But when it comes to a point where we have no province,

for it is, “God that gives the increase,” we are apt to be grievously distrustful. Our unbelief finds full play. Here it is, brethren, that after our fight is fought, after our race is run, after our allotted task is finished, there is so much need of patience, of such patience as waits only on God, and watches unto prayer, that we may finish our course with joy and the ministry we have received of the Lord Jesus.

And what about the second text? Where is that to be found? It is in the early part of this epistle of James. Turn to James 1:4, “*Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*” Oh, how indisposed we all of us are to take this advice! I think I see Paul retiring thrice to wrestle with God in prayer, that He would remove the thorn from his flesh. He felt the rankling, and he craved for relief. He had hardly thought of it as something that must irritate before it could relieve, or as a medicine that must gripe before it could heal. But oh, patience is then wrought up to its climax, when the soul so accepts the chastisement from the hand of God that she cannot, and will not, ask Him to change His treatment or alter His discipline.

Seems it not as though patience were a virtue *par excellence* which puts the last polish on Christian chastity? We will hasten back to the cornfields again. I am afraid we were forgetting them. But this time we will not talk so much with the farmer as with the crops. Know you then what it is that gives that bright yellow tinge of maturity to those blades which previously were green and growing? What, think you, imparts that golden hue to the wheat? How do you suppose the husbandman judges when it is time to thrust in the sickle?

I will tell you. All the while the corn was growing, those hollow stems served as ducts that drew up nourishment from the soil. At length the process of vegetation is fulfilled. The fibers of the plant become rigid. They cease their office. Down below there has been a failure of the vital power which is the precursor of death. Henceforth the heavenly powers work quick and marvelous changes. The sun paints his superscription on the ears of grain. They have reached the last stage. Having fed on the riches of the soil long enough, they are only influenced from above. The time of their removal is at hand, when they shall be cut down, carried away in the team, and housed in the garner.

So, too, beloved in the Lord, it is with some of you. Do I speak as a prophet? Do I not rather echo a trite observation? “The fall of the year is most thickly strewn with the fall of human life.” You have long been succored with mercies that have come up from Mother Earth. You have been exposed to cold dews, chilling frosts, stormy blasts. You have had the trial of the vapory fog, the icy winter, the fickle spring, and the summer drought. But it is nearly all over now. You are ready to depart. Not yet for a brief space has the reaper come. “You have need of patience.”

Having suffered thus far, your tottering frame has learned to bend. Patience, man—patience! A mighty transformation is about to be wrought on you in a short space. Wait on the Lord. Holiness shall now be legibly, more legibly than ever, inscribed on your forefront by the clear shining of the Sun of righteousness. The heavenly Husbandman has you daily, hourly, in His eye, till He shall say to the angel of His presence, “Put in your sickle.” Then, as we pronounce your obituary with the meed of praise due to one in whom God has wrought a perfect work, we shall record that you were patient under affliction, resigned to the will of the Lord, and ready to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Patience has had her perfect work. You lack nothing. God grant unto you this gracious “*nunc dimittis*” when your time for ingathering has come!

Now, I have only spoken to believers, because as I have already said, the unbeliever cannot wait with patience, for he has nothing to wait for. There is nothing for him but a fearful looking for judgment. Oh, it must be an awful thing to go from a life of poverty, or of suffering, or of drudgery here, into the world where the wrath of God abides forever. It matters not what your position here may be, if at the end you enter into rest. Equally little does it matter what joys or wealth you have here, if after all you are driven from the Lord’s presence. May you be led to believe in Jesus. There lies safety. May you rest in His precious blood. There is pardon. There is salvation. God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.